

Greetings Education Committee Members,

My name is Barbara Beaujour and I am a first generation Norwalk resident of Haitian descent. I've lived in Norwalk for over 30 years. I've had the experience of going through Norwalk Public School systems (from elementary through high school). My life has come full circle as I am now a parent to an amazing seven year old who currently attends the same elementary school that I attended as a child. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 5283.

One of the great parts about being a parent, is watching your child thrive in his educational environment. At seven years old, my son loves school. He admires his teachers, especially his gym teacher. He's always sharing interesting stories from his day. I love hearing the experiences from the lens of a young black boy. So when I learned, that Connecticut, the state I was raised in, has a 730 million dollar funding gap between higher need districts (that districts with 25% or more students on free or reduced lunch) and other districts. That doesn't sit well with me from the lens of a parent. I think about the potential impact of this gap in funding and this additional fiscal cliff we're facing when the ESSER funds run out. Will our schools have the funding to support the educational and social emotional needs of our students? At his age, he doesn't know that depending on where he lives; depending on his zip code will determine the amount of funding his school will receive to foster that safe learning space. He doesn't know that of Norwalk's almost 12,000 students, 74% identify as students of color (BIPOC) and 68% of our students are identified as high needs. Yet there is a disproportionality between the number of students in need and the dollars received depending on the school system.

The most important thing about this Bill is that it Funds ALL students based on their learning needs; Fully funds the education Cost Sharing Formula; It increases transparency on how schools are funded and reduces the racial and economic disparities in Connecticut education funding. Thank you for including my voice today and I urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Barbara Beaujour